

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) voted today for passage of the [College Opportunity and Affordability Act \(H.R. 4137\)](#), a strongly-supported, bipartisan bill that builds on the 110th Congress' efforts to make college more affordable and accessible. Last year, Congress passed and the President signed the [College Cost Reduction Act](#), which increased Pell grants and slashed interest rates on student loans. Today's bill includes significant provisions to encourage colleges to rein in price increases, restore integrity and accountability to student loan programs, simplify the federal student aid application process, and make textbook costs more manageable, among other things.

"In today's economy, a college degree is as important as a high school diploma was a generation ago. Yet rising college costs and other barriers to access make a higher education impossible for many qualified students," stated Rep. Hoyer. "This legislation, along with the College Cost Reduction Act enacted last year, represents an historic step by this Congress to expand college access and make higher education more affordable to more students in this country."

Rising college costs, which have grown nearly 40 percent in the State of Maryland over the last five years, and other obstacles are putting a college degree further out of reach for more of America's students. In addition to rising tuition, students and their families face an overly complex federal student aid application process and a student loan industry mired in conflicts of interest and corrupt lending practices.

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act will continue this Congress' actions to make college more affordable and accessible, by reforming our higher education system so that it operates in the best interests of students and families, while boosting our competitiveness and strengthening our future. The legislation would:

- Encourage colleges to rein in price increases and provide consumers with comprehensive information on college pricing;
- Restore integrity and accountability to the student loan programs and provide better protections for student borrowers;
- Simplify the federal student aid application process;
- Expand college access and support for low-income and minority students;
- Increase college aid and support for veterans and military families;
- Ensure equal college opportunities for students with disabilities;
- Boost campus safety and disaster readiness plans;
- Encourage colleges to adopt sustainable and energy-efficient practices, and;
- Strengthen our workforce and our competitiveness.

Also included in the bill are provisions to make textbook costs more manageable for students. Writing in support of the House bill today, The Washington Post Editorial Board noted that,

“Textbook prices have been rising rapidly in recent decades, increasing at more than 2 1/2 times the rate of inflation from 1986 to 2004, according to a Government Accountability Office report. At the University of Maryland at College Park, the average student spends more than \$1,000 a year on textbooks -- equal to about 20 percent of tuition, according to the Maryland Public Interest Research Group.”

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act is a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the primary federal law aimed at expanding college access for low- and middle-income students. The Senate has already passed its version of the bill, positioning the two chambers for a conference to reconcile the differences between the bills.

For more information on the College Opportunity and Affordability Act, [click here](#) .

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